Volume 18, No. 10 • March 25, 2011

Nation

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come
State of the Nation

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Who will call the shots?

By Will Nicholls

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for the Cree to dissolve the economic bonds which have connected them with one another, and to combine them, creating an economic engine, the separate and equal station to which the laws of Quebec and of a constitutionally protected agreement entitled them, a decent respect to the opinions of the whole Cree Nation requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the dissolution, and reorganization leading to an establishment of a new economic reality.

Perhaps I have stolen and paraphrased from United States Declaration of Independence, but I feel it is appropriate. Recently a letter found its way into the Nation offices. It concerned Grand Council/CRA Board resolution 2011-07 that looks at the establishment of the Cree Development Corporation (CDC). It also looks at dissolving the Board of Compensation, Niskamoon, the James Bay Eeyou Companee, the Cree Regional Economic Enterprises and putting CreeCo under the CDC. It looks at streamlining Cree economic entities.

I agree to a certain extent we have to look after our businesses and our entities that take care of our money. Is this the answer? I don't know, but I was surprised at the resolution. Even more, I was concerned as the person who put forth the resolution, Chief Rusty Cheezo of Eastmain sent a letter to Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come saying the resolution, which had been written after the meeting, did not reflect what he and Chief Louise Wapachee had proposed.

Cheezo said he confirmed with other chiefs the resolution wasn't what they had discussed. Cheezo said the first stage was to look at the feasibility and the wisdom of the plan. Afterwards there was to be a discussion with two of the financial entities. A committee was to be created to look at all the pros and cons and come up with recommendations on how to proceed. Only then Cheezo felt could a decision be made and it would have required another resolution to implement the Council/Board's final decision. "Nothing would to be started until we found out what all this would mean," said Cheezo.

Cheezo said mistakes were made in the resolution but wouldn't say anything concerning the corporate secretary who wrote the resolution. "I was surprised but I'll wait until the next Council/Board meeting before anything can be said," Cheezo told the Nation.

I agree with that sentiment and his stance. In looking at the Board of Compensation and its mandate concerning CreeCo, I like the fact their board is made up of elected members from each Cree community. The CDC board of directors consists of five members appointed, not elected, by the Cree and another five appointed by Quebec. The chair will be appointed by the Cree after consulting with Quebec.

Just in terms of self-governance and accountability this seems a step back. No longer would we have people accountable to members in each community as a result of the change unless we changed the way the CDC works under the Paix des Braves Agreement. More importantly the economic actions and plans would be overseen or at least observed by Quebec government appointees. Cree control of our future would be diminished in that way.

What would we get in return? There are a lot of unanswered questions. Hopefully some of them will be answered at the next Council/Board meeting. The Nation will attend as actions concerning Cree money and our version of Crown Corporations concern us all and should be transparent.

Contents

editorial
- Who will call the shots? 3

rez notes
- Mid-March crisis 4

news
- Washaw Sibi takes steps 5
- Walk4Justice bring their message 7

features
- State of the Nation 10
- cree@large: Boyce Richardson 18
- Aboriginal Achievement Awards 23
- Montreal photo collective bridges the gap 26

borderlines
- The home movie on a global scale 31
- Letters 33

UTNS
- Grant me the serenity 35

photos by:
Niels Jensen from *Eeyou Istchee*, published by COTA

on the cover:
Matthew Coon Come and his wife, Maryann Matoush, in Wemindji with residents who were re-enacting the settlement of the community fifty years earlier.

Mid-March crisis

By Sonny Orr

One of the many things that I think of, just for the sake of thinking of it, is – Is it normal to have so many catastrophes year after year? Is it just because we hear about it instantly, or is the world really going to hell in a bread basket? I woke up to the news of Japan getting blitzed by nature at a scale of 10x Godzilla with nuclear reactors going into meltdown, earthquakes, tsunamis, the whole works.

Now, let's make a count on the number of earthquakes in the last few years – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iceland, Haiti, Chile, Chile again, and even Gatineau. Has this happened on a regular basis since time immemorial and humans just weren't around to record it and transmit it around the world, or are these times just a preclude for the Big One just around the bend?

Naw, it can't be, but many things are recently developing and all at once it seems. So just to be sure, everyone should play it safe and get prepared. First of all, get duct tape, you never know, you might have to MacGyver yourself out of any and every situation. Get some sort of renewable energy source, forget solar, in case the sun can't break through the clouds of doom. Go simple wind energy or burn wood, left over from the aftermath of world destruction. Make sure your water source is good enough to drink, your body can take river water or lots of beer, which quenches thirst as well as calms nerves. In the worst case scenario, make sure you have a lot of flour, salt, lard and Klik to power you through tough times. Beans would help to stave off scurvy, but hey, who doesn't have that in their larder anyways?

You may think I'm a bit cynical about the future of the natural world. But these days, after watching show after show of asteroid crashes, 2012 predictions, more documentaries on the final days, it seems just about everyone out there is inundated with these extinction ideas. If you were not-to-believe Senator Jesse Ventura – who has an oddball Americanized viewpoint of new world orders and massive destructive forces which should wipe out just about everyone except the elite, their minions and the slave labour force left to enjoy earth to themselves – then you shouldn't have anything to worry about.

If you have to worry about the 2012 issue, just remember, it's still a year away. There's plenty of time left to go out on the land and harvest enough food to last a few month, that is, if all the wildlife doesn't become radioactive from all the fallout from the world's atomic-generating stations in the coming years. Hey, even the snow should glow at night. Can you imagine a florescent blizzard? Ha, good times are a comin'.

But seriously folks, natural disasters are nothing to laugh at. Thousands of people have died in mere moments and the ones who do survive a natural disaster on the scale of Japan and Haiti, must take a long time to get over these extremely traumatizing events. Thousands of miles north, I know people who know people who have experienced an angry Mother Nature, so the list is getting closer to home, in terms of third-hand experiences and stories. I hope that our area will be unaffected if hell does break loose, so enjoy life folks. Remember, who knows when the world will end anyways, so live like it could end any day and break out the bucket list of things you always wanted to do but haven't.

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PUBLICATION MAIL #40015005
ISSN #1206-2642
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MAGAZINES CANADA
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We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

One step closer

A new entity is formed and another step towards Washaw Sibi becoming a community is taken

By Amy German

While the Washaw Sibi Cree still remain displaced living amongst the Algonquins in the community of Pikogan, the Council Board of the Grand Council of the Crees/ Cree Regional Authority has finally set up a corporate entity that will manage the allocated funds and issue all of the contracts dealing with the outside consultants.

This was explained to the Nation by Paul Wertman, an advisor to the Washaw Sibi Cree who has worked with the Cree nation for almost 30 years and is now working alongside Washaw Sibi Chief Billy Katapatuk.

In the 1950s, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs promised the Washaw Sibi Cree their own community and talked many of them into moving onto the Pikogan reserve near Amos, Quebec. Those Cree have since languished amongst the Algonquin, not due to mistreatment but because they have lived as perpetual outsiders without support for their language or culture since they are outnumbered and share already bare-bones resources.

"In our past, we've been either forced to move, or we've had few other options but to move, whether it be to Pikogan or any number of other First Nations communities. People seem to think that we belong to Waskaganish, Pikogan, Waswanipi or Moose Factory. But people in those places don't think we really belong there either. We are Washaw Sibi Eeyuch and the only place we really belong is in our own home," said Katapatuk.

Recently, the New Village Corporation was formed pursuant to a GCC/CRA resolution. The new entity will be in charge of managing the funds and dealing with the contracts that are related to the planning and construction of the new village though the planning itself will be community-based.

While this new entity will be handling the administrative aspects of forming the community, it will be the people slated to move into the new community who will be determining their future as they will be involved in every aspect of the community-planning initiative.

This will be done based on a four-pillar strategy with the first one being minimizing costs wherever possible.

The second pillar is based on healing in recognizing that these Cree are coming to this juncture in their collective lives with baggage and that for a new village to function successfully, people, both on an individual level and a collective level, need to address numerous issues that could move them towards dysfunction.

The third pillar will be youth engagement. It is the belief of the Washaw Sibi Cree that the youth have to be intimately involved because before long the youth will be running this village. Community members need to be totally committed and engaged in seeing the new village is built properly so that the Washaw Sibi youth will have a reason to get out of bed in the morning when it is finished. This is going to be an essential part of the planning.

"It isn't fair to our children and to our future generations that they do not have a home of their own. That's why we've been struggling so hard to have a new village – so that our children will feel that they belong somewhere. Everywhere we've been we've always felt like outsiders. It's time to change that. Everyone deserves to feel that they belong somewhere," said Katapatuk.

The fourth pillar is sustainable development. Community members have made it clear at various meetings that they want this new village to be respectful of Cree culture and traditions and in keeping with that the desire is to have a green village whenever possible.

According to Wertman, these pillars were designed to work as umbrella concepts that will inform all of the other technical planning whether it is urban design, economic development, tourism or infrastructure. They all have to be cognizant and be reflective of these four major pillars.

Because the Washaw Sibi Cree define themselves as being distinct from the communities they have been forced into, they have spent decades suffering a much poorer standard of health, economic prosperity, employment levels and general satisfaction with life. They wish only to have what Crees in the other nine communities enjoy daily.

"We are looking forward to having our own village so that we can begin to properly look after our own people. We want our Elders to be somewhere comfortable and we want our youth to believe that they have a future," said Katapatuk.

Washaw Sibi Chief Billy Katapatuk

"WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO HAVING OUR OWN VILLAGE SO THAT WE CAN BEGIN TO PROPERLY LOOK AFTER OUR OWN PEOPLE. WE WANT OUR ELDERS TO BE SOMEWHERE COMFORTABLE AND WE WANT OUR YOUTH TO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE A FUTURE."

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Speaking out for the voiceless

The cofounders of Walk4Justice bring their message to McGill University

By Amy German

"You don't see it the way we have walked it," said Bernie Williams, cofounder of Walk4Justice, a British Columbia-based organization that is devoted to raising awareness concerning Canada's 582+ missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Williams, whose mother, two sisters and brother were all murdered in Vancouver's downtown eastside, had come to Montreal along with Walk4Justice cofounder Gladys Radek, to participate in a roundtable discussion organized by Montreal collective Stolen Sisters and the McGill University Aboriginal Law Association (ALA) on March 10.

The event was held in conjunction with a 13-day McGill-based program focused on increasing awareness about violence against Aboriginal women and was organized by the ALA and the McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism from March 8-20.

Radek and Williams, who are Vancouver-based frontline workers, began their organization several years ago in response to the alarming number of missing and murdered women in Canada who are unaccounted for. Throughout their journeys on foot, the two, along with supporters, have travelled BC's infamous Highway 16 (a.k.a. Highway of Tears) and have walked from Vancouver to other provinces to raise awareness, guest speak and educate whoever they can on the issue. While travelling across the country, Walk4Justice displays photos of the missing and murdered on their placards as well as on the sides of their van.

"We rely on donations and volunteers. The majority of walkers are family members who have lost a relative whether it was last year or 40 years ago. These family members are the ones who share with us their pictures, their stories and the injustices that have been happening for all of these years.

"There is the lack of investigations, the lack of police support and victim's services. There is also a lack of services for the women who are leaving dangerous situations that leads to a serious problem in Canada where women are not being protected and we are talking about all women," said Radek.

The rate of women going missing is statistically higher for Aboriginal women and because Aboriginal women are also statistically poorer and live in areas where they have less access to social services and other resources, they are more vulnerable than any other population in Canada.

> "THEY BLAME THE MOUNTAINS, THEY BLAME THE SCENERY – EVERYTHING BUT THE REAL ISSUES. THEY SAY IT'S EASIER TO HIDE A WOMAN AND EASIER TO KILL A WOMAN IN BC BECAUSE WE HAVE THIS RUGGED TERRAIN."

Radek has a personal connection to the cause – her niece disappeared along the Highway of Tears in 2005 while fleeing her community and abusive partner. She was never seen again.

According to Radek, BC has statistically the highest rate of missing and murdered women however she and Williams feel the province is doing little about it. She said she frequently hears police speak on local newscasts pointing to how BC's topography contributes to the situation.

"They blame the mountains, they blame the scenery – everything but the real issues. They say it's easier to hide a woman and easier to kill a woman in BC because we have this rugged terrain," said Radek.

Though Walk4Justice has been gaining recognition across the country as more and more Canadians learn about the atrocities committed against Aboriginal women, Radek said she feels betrayed by those who originally led the movement: the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC).

Having already stripped the funding for research into the situation that was done through NWAC's Sisters in Spirit Initiative (SIS), the Harper government has publicly stated that because of its negative connotations, the title SIS be no longer used. Rumours suggest that NWAC might even lose its most recent funding of $3 million if it continues to make reference to SIS, use the photos of the missing and murdered women that it published in its research documents because the federal government is trying to avoid the negative PR.

During interviews with Walk4Justice, Irkar Beljaars, the host of Native Solidarity News on Montreal's CKUT radio station, added his own horrifying account of this at a protest he organized on Parliament Hill on February 14.

"I helped organize the February 14 vigil and rally in Ottawa. A few days before the event, NWAC tried to stop us and tried to silence this activity. They asked us to change aspects of it, change the posters and not use the words 'Sisters in Spirit'.

"My sources told me that NWAC had been pressured by the Status of Women Canada (who funds them) because their funding was being threatened. NWAC president Jeannette Corbiere-Lavell actually showed up at the rally and told us that they couldn't support us because of the pressure from the Harper government to shut up anyone who is speaking out about it."

So while Walk4Justice works to raise awareness about the plight of Aboriginal women in Canada, it seems the NWAC is working on behalf of the government to silence these voices.

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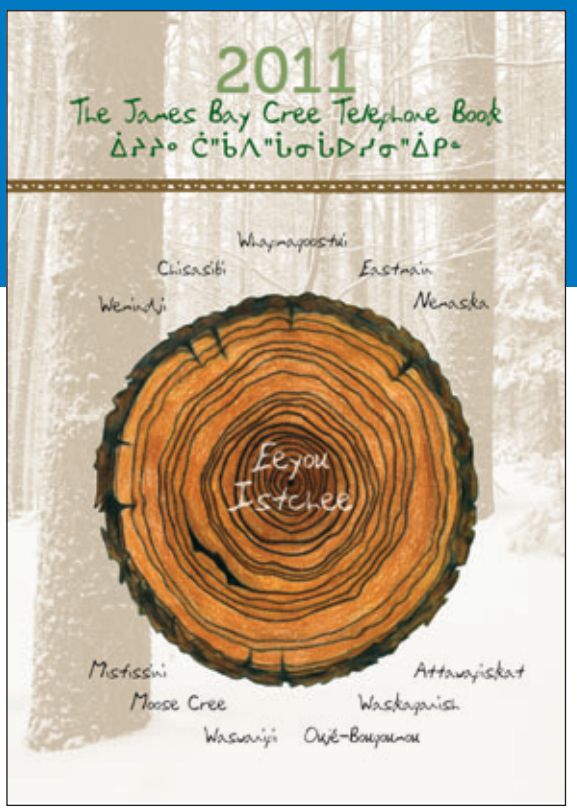

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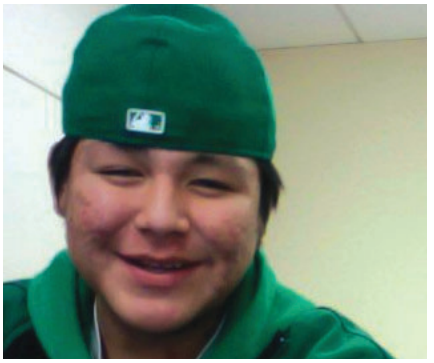
Cost: $25 per phone book plus 11$ shipping and handling, total: $36
Outside the Cree Territory please add taxes for a total of $41.01.
Special thanks go out to everyone in the communities and in the band offices who contributed to the production of this year's phone book. Without you this project would not have been possible. Meegwetch!



Help find Jordan Wabasse

The family of 15-year-old Jordan Wabasse is calling on the public's help to locate their son who has been missing since February 7, when he was last seen in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

The Wabasse family is particularly concerned since Jordan is a member of the Webequie First Nation, a remote Ojibway community located 540km north of Thunder Bay, that is accessible only by air and intermittently through a winter road. This was his first time visiting a city.

Wabasse is 6'1" with brown eyes and black hair and was last seen wearing a grey winter jacket, a purple hooded sweatshirt, black pants, white Adidas shoes and a grey Toronto Maple Leafs hat.

The Wabasse family is asking anyone with information regarding Jordan's disappearance to contact the authorities listed below:

Thunder Bay Police
Criminal Investigation Branch
1200 Balmoral Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 5Z5
Phone: 807-684-1237
Crime Stoppers: 1-800-222-8477

Human rights tribunal dismisses complaint about the welfare of First Nations children

Both the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada (FNCFCSC) have expressed deep concern after the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal dismissed their joint complaint on discrimination caused by unequal funding for First Nation children in the child welfare system.

AFN National Chief Shawn A-in-chut Atleo stated via press release, "We are very disappointed with this ruling by the Tribunal which seems to suggest it is acceptable for the federal government to treat our children unequally and unfairly."

According to the AFN, the Tribunal ruling disregards numerous documents provided to the chair that confirm this inequality.

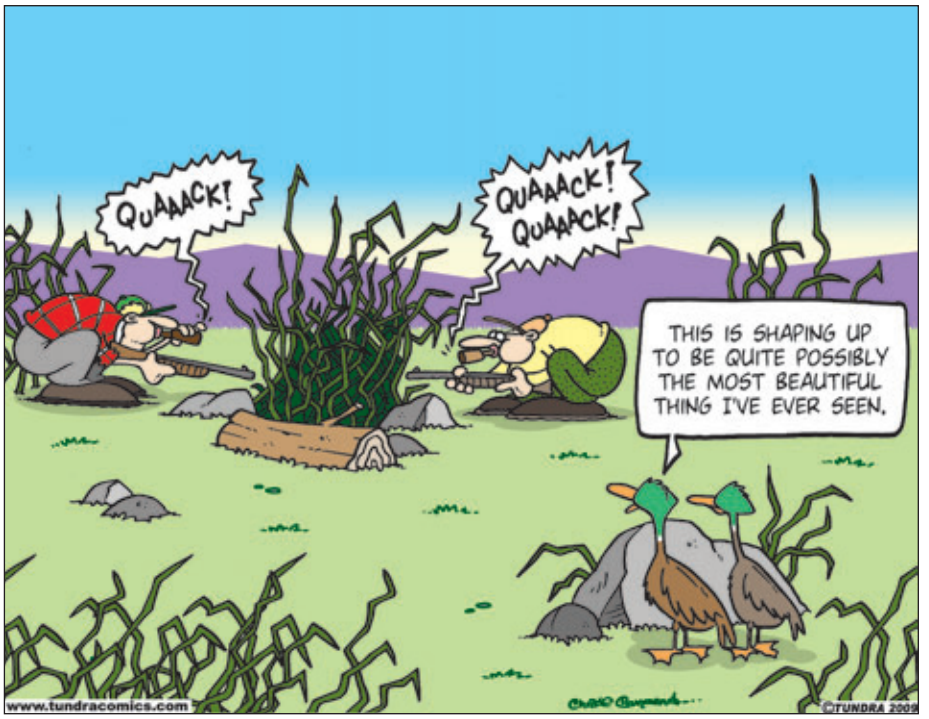
The AFN's co-complainant, the FNCFCSC, has already stated its intention to appeal the March 15 ruling within the next 30 days.

Ontario murder trial postponed due to lack of Aboriginals in jury pool

A landmark Ontario court of appeal decision has halted the trial of Andre Theodore Wareham, accused in the January 2009 stabbing death of William Harvey Atkins, because the jury pool lacked Aboriginals.

While over 100 people presented themselves for jury duty In Thunder Bay on March 15, Ontario Superior Court Judge Helen Pierce adjourned the second-degree murder trial, turning away those who showed up. Pierce said she based her decision to halt proceedings on the fact that a jury pool lacking Aboriginal community members would fail to be representative of the northern Ontario community that has a large Native demographic.

The trial has been reset for November by which time court officers are expected to have assembled a list of Aboriginal community members who have previously participated in jury duty.



Comic strip courtesy of Tundra Comics: www.tundracomics.com

US think-tank urges Canada to protect waters in the boreal forest

The Pew Environment Group, a US-based think-tank and non-profit group, has released a report, "A Forest of Blue: Canada's Boreal Forest, the World's Waterkeeper", calling on Canada's governmental and Aboriginal leaders to create legislation to protect waters found within Canada's boreal forest.

The report details how these waters are the world's largest source of freshwaters but this precious resource is under constant threat as a result of mining, water diversion and energy projects.

To read the report, go to: www.pewtrusts.org

State of the Nation

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come discusses the issues facing the Cree Nation

By Will Nicholls

It's been an interesting year and Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come is probably one of the hardest working politicians in Canada. His typical day starts at 6am in the morning and doesn't end until after midnight. Yet he still ensures he attends many functions, such as the opening of the latest Cree venture, a partnership in a hotel in Val-d'Or, and the opening of the Justice Centre in Mistissini. These actions allow him to keep his pulse on what is happening in the Cree Nation as well as knowing what people want and need. Once again the Nation asks him a few questions to find out what he thinks and has done. Through our Grand Chief we can get an idea of accomplishments, tasks carried out and what might be happening on issues important to all Crees.

The Nation: *First off, how close are we to self-governance? What has been done in regards to Quebec and Canada?*

Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come: Currently, the Cree Nation is involved in several very important initiatives all of which, together, have as their objective the development of a Cree Nation Government which will provide our nation with the tools to truly become masters in our own house.

Pursuant to the New Relationship Agreement with Canada we have entered into negotiations with the Government of Canada. The Cree Regional Authority will now have an expanded role in regional governance and it will have new legislative authority. Our current negotiations will be based on a proposal for a Cree Nation Constitution and a description of these new and expanded powers of our regional government.

We are also currently in negotiations with the Government of Quebec on matters of Cree governance. When Quebec enacted Bill 40, the control over the planning and administration of our traditional Cree lands was transferred to officials elected in non-Cree municipalities located mostly in the south and outside of Eeyou Istchee. I made it very clear to Premier Jean Charest that this was, in effect, a form of "apartheid", and the Cree Nation would not stand for it. This bill represents a clear assault on Cree rights and threatens to undermine the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) and the "Paix des Braves" Agreement. Charest agreed with me that Bill 40 must be undone. We are now in negotiations with Quebec to define a new governance structure in the region, which acknowledges Cree control over Cree territory, and builds upon, rather than undermines, previous agreements.

We have entered into these nation-to-nation negotiations with the intention of establishing a progressive and democratic model of a Cree Government which will clarify a wide range of governance issues in the territory and which will provide clarity and certainty with respect to the future development of Eeyou Istchee.

To support the work of these negotiating tables, we have also established a Cree National Governance Working Group which we have charged with the responsibility to consult with all the communities, all the Cree entities and with our people in urban environments for the purpose of reflecting upon, and developing ideas related to the development of an Eeyou constitution and governance structures. To ensure maximum participation by our people in this

process, not only are we visiting the communities, but we are also using new communications media to reach out to as many people as possible.

It is my hope that, as a result of all these interconnected initiatives, that we will develop a unique Cree form of government, which is based on our fundamental belief that "our land is our life". It is the relationship to the land which is the basis of our traditional way of life and our understanding about our relationship to the natural world. The land and its resources have sustained us and taken care of us in the past, and it must continue to do so in the future. It is our governance initiatives which will ensure that this happens.

TN: *Now when we are talking self-governance, one issue sticks in everyone's mind and that is the Municipality of James Bay (MBJ) and the powers granted to them under Bill 40. This issue affects the people on the land, our way of life as traditional activities are affected and a host of other potential problems dealing with economic, social and cultural development. What is the Grand Council doing in this area?*

MCC: Part of the struggle to undo the effects of Quebec's Bill 40 is to put a stop to some of the most severe actions that MBJ has taken which are contrary to our Cree and Aboriginal rights. Some time ago, MBJ charged a Cree Elder with firearms violations. We consider this an attempt to undermine Cree hunting rights and to impose misguided MBJ regulations on our hunters. We have indicated very strongly that we do not accept this and we will ensure that it never happens again. Our legal counsel is exploring the possibility of settling these charges by payment of a minimal fine, however, without any admission whatsoever of the validity of the MBJ Council or its by-laws. MBJ has indicated that this might be acceptable to them and they may be prepared to drop the charges against the Cree Elder.

In another attempt, MBJ had begun proceedings before the "access to information" commission to obtain and make public information concerning our maps

"MBJ CHARGED A CREE ELDER WITH FIREARMS VIOLATIONS. WE CONSIDER THIS AN ATTEMPT TO UNDERMINE CREE HUNTING RIGHTS AND TO IMPOSE MISGUIDED MBJ REGULATIONS ON OUR HUNTERS. WE HAVE INDICATED VERY STRONGLY THAT WE DO NOT ACCEPT THIS AND WE WILL ENSURE THAT IT NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN."

Desjardins présente
LES GRANDS PRIX DU TOURISME QUÉBÉCOIS 2011
James Bay tourism
Eeyou Istchee Tourism
Tourisme Eeyou Istchee
VIVEZ L'AVENTURE DU TOURISME !
TOURISM: EXPERIENCE THE ADVENTURE
Co-presidents, Eeyou Istchee / James Bay ACCORD Tourism Niche Committee
• Thomas Coon & René Savage •
Fishing Guide for Awashish Outdoor Adventures, Mistissini
• Rocky Neeposh •
Communication & Marketing Officer at Cree Native Arts & Crafts Association, Ouje-Bougoumou
• Gaston Cooper •
Personality of the year : Festival du doré Baie-James
• Dany Girard •
Owner of the Gite de la rivière, Lac Dulieux
• Sylvie Cauchon •
Assistant chef of the restaurant Le Bistro de l'Hôtel Chibougamau
• Patrick Bélisle •
Desjardins
SADC
Hydro Québec
Municipalité de Baie-James
Ville de Chibougamau
Ville de Matagami
Nemaska Development Corporation
Cree Nation of Wemindji
airCreebec
Le Jamésien
La Sentinelle
Beesum communications
Destinations
planète 93,5
CIAU FM
La Radio CFNO CHEF 99,9
Québec
Avec la participation de :
- Société de développement de la Baie-James
- Ministère du Tourisme
GraphCat enr.

of what is known as the "Cree 1% areas". Our legal counsel has been able to obtain an indefinite postponement of these proceedings. However, if MBJ ever attempts to revive them we will fight this in the courts on constitutional grounds.

MBJ has also attempted to impose its own taxes on Cree businesses. Legal proceedings have been initiated; again, however, we have managed to obtain a suspension of these proceedings.

We will remain vigilant and ensure that MBJ is not permitted to undermine our rights and to claim for itself powers which are neither legally nor morally justifiable.

> "I MADE IT VERY CLEAR TO PREMIER JEAN CHAREST THAT THIS WAS, IN EFFECT, A FORM OF 'APARTHEID', AND THE CREE NATION WOULD NOT STAND FOR IT."

TN: *Another potential problem area is the Plan Nord. Crees know that there are various tables and whatnot that the Cree have managed to participate in. What is the Cree outlook on the Plan Nord?*

MCC: When Charest announced his proposal for a northern development plan we made it very clear that any such plan would need to be undertaken within the context of the fundamental agreements with the Cree Nation that describe how the territory will be developed in the JBNQA and the Paix des Braves. We argued, in fact, that the JBNQA is already a Plan Nord and anything new must be completely compatible with it. We also made it very clear that unless this Plan Nord is compatible with the JBNQA, unless it involves the Cree Nation, and unless there are clear benefits for the Cree Nation, there will be no Plan Nord.

Quebec's Deputy Premier Nathalie Normandeau has understood our concerns and agreed to establish a separate Cree/Quebec table to discuss the proposed Plan Nord. Normandeau, together with Minister Pierre Corbeil, met with the Cree Chiefs to present the Plan Nord. As a result of this meeting a number of sub-committees have been established for each of the sectors covered in the Plan Nord.

We have developed our own "Plan Nord" which describes, from the Cree perspective, the range of potential projects which could form part of a northern development plan. This Cree Plan Nord will be the basis for our further discussions with Quebec on the subject of northern development.

We have also informed Quebec that a northern development plan cannot be discussed independently of a discussion on governance of the territory. We see these two as intimately connected.

We have on numerous occasions reiterated our position that we are prepared to work together with Quebec to implement a northern development plan provided that there is Cree consent, that there is Cree involvement, that the projects are socially and environmentally acceptable, that the plan respects our previous agreements, and, that the projects result in benefits for our communities.

TN: *A big thing this past year at the Grand Council/CRA AGA was the issue of the offshore islands. We had a referendum and a response from the Cree people. How is that file going or not?*

MCC: Over the course of the last year, the people of Eeyou Istchee overwhelmingly approved by referendum, the Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement, often referred to as the Cree Offshore Agreement. Under the agreement, the Crees now have full ownership, including subsurface rights, over almost all of the islands in the Cree traditional area of eastern James Bay and Hudson Bay from Long Island going south. We also have joint ownership with the Nunavik Inuit of most of the islands from Long Island to north of Umiujaq. All Crees will continue to have access to these islands, while non-Crees will need permission.

The Crees have the right to harvest in the Offshore Area without the need for permits and licenses but harvesting may be subject to certain conservation measures. Also, the Crees will need to be consulted before any major decisions are taken regarding development projects in the Offshore Area, and proponents of projects will be required to

Photo by Niels Jensen from *Eeyou Istchee*, published by COTA

George Kudlu, a resident of Wemindji, collects firewood on one of the Walrus Islands in James Bay.

negotiate impact and benefit agreements with the Crees. Further, the Crees will have the right to receive a share of royalty payments made to government from the extraction of natural resources in the Offshore Area.

In addition, under this agreement, Crees will have priority for government employment opportunities in the Offshore Area as well as access to government contracts. Canada will provide the Crees a one-time payment of $5 million to assist the Grand Council in implementing this agreement as well as a capital transfer payment to the Crees of $50 million.

I recently met with Minister of Indian Affairs John Duncan, who assured me that the legislation which will enact this agreement will be introduced to Parliament very soon.

TN: *The Nation covered a new Mining Policy in the past year. Have there been results or actions taken as a result and in what way will it benefit the Crees?*

MCC: It has become very clear that in the coming decades mining development will become an increasingly important sector in the development of our territory. At the same time, we continue to occupy and use the entire territory for our traditional activities of hunting, fishing and trapping.

In this context, our challenge is to reach an accommodation between mining development and the Cree needs for protection of the environment and our traditional activities and for a fair share of economic benefits for our communities. To help meet this challenge, we have recently adopted the Cree Nation Mining Policy.

The Cree Nation Mining Policy is one of the positive outcomes of decades of effort on the part of the Grand Council to secure recognition and acknowledgement of Cree rights. It is an expression of how our fundamental human rights and our Cree rights are applicable in the context of mining development within Eeyou Istchee.

While some might still believe that the Cree are anti-development, the Cree Nation Mining Policy makes it clear that this is not the case. Under this policy, the Cree undertake to support and participate in resource development within our traditional territory, provided that our rights are respected, that appropriate measures are taken to protect the environment and our traditional activities and that benefits flow to our communities.

To be clear, our position is that no mining developments may occur in Eeyou Istchee unless they are socially acceptable to the Cree communities, as demonstrated by the recent conclusion of agreements with our communities. The Crees must be active partners, not just passive bystanders, in these developments.

These agreements must address a wide range of social, economic and environmental concerns on the part of our communities. Through these agreements, the Crees and mining proponents ensure that mining development is in keeping with our traditional approach to sustainable development.

With the proper governance structures in place, I am confident that we can proceed with proper development of the resources within Eeyou Istchee. On the governance of the territory, the Cree Nation is now at a crossroads with the Government of Quebec. We have before us an unparalleled opportunity for the development of the Eeyou Istchee for the benefit of all Quebecers, Cree and non-Cree, in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership.

TN: *Do you have concrete examples? Some of the past agreements, such as Troilus, have been great but there have been some others that weren't.*

MCC: To illustrate our undertaking to meaningfully participate in resource development within our traditional territory, let me mention a few examples of discussions in which the Cree are involved with mining companies.

In 2007, the Crees began discussions with Les Mines Opinaca, a subsidiary of Goldcorp, on the Élénore project, a gold mining project near Wemindji. The purpose of the negotiations is to finalize a Collaboration Agreement between the parties, which would allow for the operation of the mining project, while ensuring direct and indirect benefits for the Cree Parties.

In late June 2008, the parties signed an Advanced Exploration Program Agreement for the Opinaca Mine, an initiative of the Crees, to promote the common or simultaneous assessment of the permanent road, airstrip, power line and exploration shaft for the mine. While negotiations slowed in late 2008 and early 2009, essentially due to the worldwide economic situation, the parties successfully finalized a Collaboration Agreement in December 2010.

Second, the Crees are currently in discussions with Stornoway Diamonds for the Renard project, the first diamond mine in Quebec. In July 2010, the parties signed a pre development agreement, which is essentially a framework to collaborate on subjects of common interest during the planning and development of the Renard diamond mine. It is a first step in the direction of an "Impact and Benefit Agreement" (IBA) which will be developed by the parties during the coming months.

A third example is the negotiations between Nemaska Exploration Inc. and the Crees on the exploration and possible commercial production of a lithium ore body recently discovered on the Wabouchi property. These negotiations led to the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding last summer, which sets the framework for upcoming discussions on an IBA.

These examples show that the principles embodied in the Cree Nation Mining Policy are more than words. They guide the way in which the Crees will conduct themselves with mining proponents on the territory.

TN: *What about the Matoush Uranium Project? It's been a hot issue in Mistissini and the surrounding area.*

MCC: Chief Richard Shecapio was very clear in his statement at the public hearings held in Mistissini and Chibougamau on November 23 and 25 in relation to the underground exploration phase of the Matoush project.

The public hearings were a forum for the commissioners of the federal review panel, COFEX, and the provincial review panel, COMEX, to assess the Matoush project. The hearings were the final stage of the public review process for the environmental impact study on the underground exploration phase of the Matoush project.

The Grand Council of the Crees, knowing that this was a difficult decision for the community of Mistissini, and knowing that the decision was based on a great deal of research and fact-finding on the part of the community, immediately acknowledged and offered full support to the Cree Nation of Mistissini in its decision to reject a proposal for a uranium exploration mine within their territory.

Decisions of this nature are especially difficult for First Nations particularly at a time when we are seeking out development proposals to address very real employment challenges. The Cree Nation as a whole remains open to mining development opportunities provided that they are compatible with the Cree way of life. However, as Mistissini indicated, on balance the community felt the potential impacts of this proposal far outweigh its benefits.

I was shocked to learn that there were reports in the media that suggested that the Grand Council had previously supported the Matoush project. Knowing that the community was carrying its their own extensive research into the potential impacts of uranium mining, and not wanting to prejudice their final decision on this project, the Grand Council made no statement whatsoever on this project.

> "YES, THE SWEAT LODGE IN OUJÉ-BOUGOUMOU. I AM AWARE OF THE ISSUE AND I AM ALSO SENSITIVE TO THE CONCERNS OF ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THIS VERY DIFFICULT ISSUE. **THIS IS ONE OF THOSE ISSUES, WHICH FORCES US ALL TO THINK THROUGH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR COLLECTIVE RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS.**"

TN: *I know there are other inhabitants of our traditional lands being affected by development in the territory. One of the concerns brought up by some trappers concerned the diminishing caribou herds. It's been on the news and hunters and trappers are concerned. Are there problems in Eeyou Istchee and how is it being dealt with?*

MCC: Recently, I publicly called upon Quebec's Minister of Natural Resources, Nathalie Normandeau, to apply "The Forest-Dwelling Caribou Recovery Plan in Quebec (2005-2012)" to the Cree territory in northern Quebec.

For some time now, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife (MNRW) has been side-stepping this issue in our territory. The government's Recovery Plan for Caribou is being applied

throughout Quebec resulting in a cautious approach to forestry development. However in Eeyou Istchee, the MNRW is pushing for the approval of major forestry roads in critical habitat areas.

The James Bay Advisory Committee on the Environment has called for the herd to be protected and for a plan to be developed for this. This request has been met by MNRW with excuses and no action.

The companies and citizens of the area have been led to believe that the shortage of wood is due to the Cree forest protection measures in the Paix des Braves. This is untrue. In fact, the current wood shortage is due to years of unsustainable levels of cutting. We have been making this point for many years. Even the present proposal will allow for only a few more short years of wood cutting while it takes more than 80 years for the trees in this area to grow to a commercial size.

It is difficult for the Crees to accept the government's promise of a Plan Nord based on the principle of sustainable development if it neglects to apply its own laws regarding endangered species in our territory. This why I called upon Normandeau to take immediate action on this issue.

It is our view that not enough is known about the impact of the proposed roads on the resident caribou populations. Rather than proceed at this time we should invoke the Precautionary Principle, whereby there should not be any roads built or any cutting done in these areas at least until the consequences for the caribou are known and protection of the herds assured.

It is important to note that forestry roads and its associated development have been identified in Quebec's Recovery Plan as one of the most critical threats to the species.

We support recent action taken by the Cree First Nation of Waswanipi, who recently joined with Greenpeace to protest these forestry roads.

TN: *Oujé-Bougoumou has been in the news recently?*

MCC: I am pleased to report that the negotiators on behalf of the Grand Council and Oujé-Bougoumou have successfully concluded the negotiation of a Complementary Agreement to the JBNQA which will finally incorporate Oujé-Bougoumou into the JBNQA as the ninth Cree community. Amendments to the Cree-Naskapi Act have already been enacted to reflect this, and these amendments will come into effect once the land which will form Oujé-Bougoumou's land regime will be set aside by Quebec and Canada.

Our negotiators have also concluded a "Final Agreement" pursuant to the section of the Paix des Braves which addresses the formal inclusion of Oujé-Bougoumou into the JBNQA. These agreements deal only with Oujé-Bougoumou matters and leave other matters related to an eventual transfer of lands from Mistissini for resolution in the future.

TN: *That's great but I was thinking of…*

MCC: Yes, the sweat lodge in Oujé-Bougoumou. I am aware of the issue and I am also sensitive to the concerns of all those involved in this very difficult issue. This is one of those issues, which forces us all to think through the relationship between our collective rights and the rights of individuals. It may be, that as we work through this issue we may find that it is a blessing in disguise since it forces us to think through very difficult issues and put into place approaches to such difficult issues which is sensitive, dignified, respectful and forward-looking.

The Cree Nation now needs unity as never before as we try to make serious advances in the area of governance. It will be essential that we find an appropriate accommodation of diverse views and diverse beliefs.

We need to find a solution to this issue, which strikes just the right balance between respect for fundamental human rights and the sensitivities of community members, particularly our Elders.

I have spoken to Cree Elders about this matter and they have told me about the way in which sweat-lodge practices and shaking-tent ceremonies were performed as part of our Cree culture in the past. They have told me that when these practices were carried out in the past they were always done away from any tents that people lived in. The Cree tradition is to perform these practices further away. The people in Oujé-Bougoumou who are involved with these practices may wish to consider conducting these ceremonies in a way which respects traditional Cree practices and perform these practices away from any residences.

As we continue to move forward in our various negotiations to enhance Cree governance we will, of course, affirm the basic human right of religious expression as well as other basic rights which are reflected in international, Canadian and Quebec human rights instruments.

It has always been the Cree way to find accommodation, to respect sensitivities and concerns, and to find workable solutions whenever there has been the potential for tensions or conflicts. I am confident that we will con-

tinue to do so in a way that gives expression to the fundamental Cree values of respect and caring.

TN: *Do you have any last words you want to say to Quebec, the Jamésiens and to the Cree Nation?*

MCC: Let me start by reiterating that the Crees support the sustainable development of the North. In all our discussions with Quebec, and with our neighbours, we have listened carefully to their concerns and priorities, and we share many of them. Like them, we face the challenge of creating jobs for our youth and making Eeyou Istchee an attractive place for them to live and raise their families. Like them, we know that education is the key to a secure economic base for our population, especially the younger generations. Like them, we seek improved education and housing for our people.

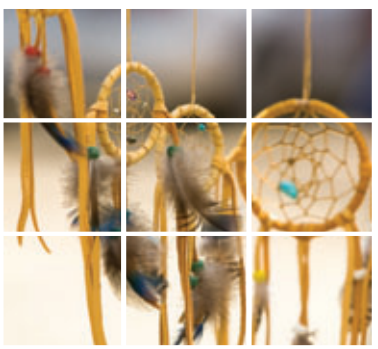
We have made, and continue to make, efforts to build partnerships, in the spirit of the Paix des Braves, with Quebec, Jamésiens and others for the orderly development of the territory, for the benefit of all.

I wish to emphasize that the Crees want to build a real partnership with Quebec and Quebecers. After all, we Crees live in Quebec and the North. We want to take our rightful place in the public life of Quebec and the North. We want to be fully involved, as partners, in the economic, social, cultural and political development of Quebec. We have much to contribute, in skills, initiative, imagination and drive. We can be privileged partners of Quebec in the sustainable development of Eeyou Istchee. Believe me, we could ask for nothing better.

We now have the opportunity to do something bold that will benefit, not just the Crees, but all Quebecers, including the Jamésiens, now and for the future. We are working now with the Government of Quebec to modernize governance structures in the territory.

We have also begun to involve the Jamésien leaders in the process. We challenge them (in a friendly way) to show imagination and openness in working with us to put in place innovative and responsive governance structures for the territory and for the future that we share.

This reflects broader trends. Economic globalization has fostered partnerships among peoples from opposite sides of the globe. When the JBNQA was signed in 1975, who could have imagined that China would today invest in a major iron mine in north-eastern Quebec (Innu territory), that a Swiss mining company would today own the Raglan mine (Inuit territory) or that a Brazilian mining company would own the Voisey Bay mine (territory of the Innu and Inuit of Labrador)? And who could then have foreseen that one of the world's leading gold mining companies, Goldcorp, would sign a Collaboration Agreement with the Crees for the Opinaca Mine in Eeyou Istchee? Yet it has all happened. And it is just a taste of things to come. We must be ready; we must prepare our future, now. Of one thing we can be sure: together, we are stronger than we are alone.



gowlings' aboriginal law group
wishes you a happy spring cultural break!

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cree@large: Boyce Richardson

by ndiamon

One of the first films where I recognized Native people as being genuine was Boyce Richardson's Job's Garden. Job Bearskin, the grandfather of one of my classmates, was exactly the way I saw him in Richardson's documentary. Smiling, kindly, friendly and dignified, even as he limped, by our playground on his way to wherever he was headed. Job Bearskin was our first live movie star when we were school children on the island of Fort George.

Richardson's films and, later, his books, reminded us to our own culture and people. These were films where we could actually follow what was going on onscreen. They were in Cree and had been filmed in our very own backyards. One of my favourite scenes from his works is the conclusion of The Cree Hunters of Mistassini when the Blacksmith, Jolly and Voyageur families leave their winter camp as a Cree hunter's drum plays. It is melancholy, hopeful, powerful and pure cinema.

Richardson was the Canadian Native people's champion at a time when very few of his ilk even dared such an act and we are the better for it. Journalist, filmmaker, pioneering blogger, writer and scourge of his own chosen occupations, Boyce is not an easy interview. Witness the following.

Epitaph: I neither need nor want one.

Most treasured possession: I'm not into things. It's all just stuff.

How you would like to be remembered? I don't want to be remembered, I just want to be recycled.

Sight you like to see: These are crazy questions!

Worst habit: Agreeing to inane interviews.

Happiest moment: George Bernard Shaw said, "Happiness is not something worth aspiring to."

Greatest accomplishment: When I went to James Bay 25 years after I made Job's Garden, the Crees seemed to trust me.

Childhood ambition: To be a world-class cricketer.

Your idea of misery: To have a toothache in a peasant village in India.

Place you would like to visit: Patagonia.

Current state of mind: I'm more radical now than when I was young.

Funniest person you know: My son Thom, commonly known as S.O.B.

Title of your autobiography: From The Ninth Decade.

Smartest person you know: Linus Pauling who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry and peace.

Last fight you were in: When I was in primary school in Invercargill, New Zealand, when I was 7 or 8 and I lost. He was smaller than me and I got the message.

Most interesting person you know: Job Bearskin.

First job: Copyholder in the reading room of the Southland Times in Invercargill when I was 17. The lowest form of journalism.

Worst thing you've ever said to anyone: You are a nasty piece of work.

Brush with greatness: Pandit Nehru

What makes you angry? When the All Blacks lose.

Inspiration: When Nelson Mandela dictated the terms of his own release from jail through sheer moral power.

Favourite line from a poem: "Dull would he be of soul who could pass by a sight so touching in its majesty." William Wordsworth

Favourite word: Disestablishmentarianism.

Best advice you ever heard: Keep the seat of your pants on the chair if you want to write a book.

Talent you wish you had: I wish I was a good writer.

Thing you hate most about yourself: I'm a lying hypocrite.

Cree Nation Governance Working Group

Progress Report

"We've heard the people's voices loud and clear –their ideas are on the wall. These ideas can guide the (negotiating) tables as they move forward."

"We've heard the reports as the consultations were going on –we've been applying them as it was going on."

Grand Chief
Dr. Matthew Coon Come

March 2011

Introduction/Purpose

We Cree have governed ourselves since before recorded history. In the last 35 years, we have slowly put together governing structures and bodies to make decisions, care for each other, and relate to the outside world.

For many reasons, now is the time that we have the opportunity to look at our own governance as a whole and create what will work for us in the 21st century. The Federal Government supports this initiative as the mandate for a process on Cree governance comes from Chapter 3 of the New Relationship Agreement.

So a "Cree Nation Governance Working Group" was created to look into the matter. After extensive study of the topic of governance, the group decided to consult with our people on the values they want to hold in Cree governance, and get their suggestions for Cree government. This was done in order to create the foundation and building blocks to build a governance model that reflects the people's wisdom.

Timeline of Consultations

In late winter 2010, two pilot consultations were held, in Waswanipi and in Whapmagoostui. The process was refined after these meetings.

Between August 2010 and February 2011, the traveling consultation team gathered input from elders, youth, men, women, and leadership in 10 communities including Washaw-Sibi, 5 government entities (Youth General Assembly, Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association, Cree School Board, Cree Trappers' Association and Cree Health Board), and 5 locations outside Eeyou Istchee where Cree live and go to school (Val d'Or, Ottawa, Montreal, North Bay, and Sudbury).

A local representative set up each consultation, so there were local differences, but the same questions were asked of everyone.

The questions were also asked in surveys linked to the CNGWG website (http://cngwg.ca) and a Facebook page for Cree Governance Working Group.

Process

The intent of the process was to gather ideas from the people before models of governance are created, so that the models can reflect the will of the people.

In each consultation, a slide show was shown about our history of Cree governance, so that people understand the topic and the great legacy this process is building upon. (This slide show is available on the Facebook site for CNGWG).

Then we asked three main open-ended questions of the people.

1. "What are the Cree core values and guiding principles we want to see in a governance model for the future?" These were written on cards and clustered on the wall, and then the themes were named.
2. After a quick video sharing a proposal for Quebec that Abel Bosum and his team are working on, we asked, "What suggestions do you have for the negotiating team for the proposal to Quebec?"
3. The next question was "What are some specific suggestions you have for the form of government we are creating for the Cree Nation?" People walked around by posters on the wall and wrote their thoughts on sticky notes.

All of the results were documented: the card workshops are each documented as a table, the suggestions for the Quebec proposal are documented by a video camera and notes typed as people were speaking, and the specific suggestions were typed up in answer to the 10 questions.

Number of Participants

Each community had elders, women, men, youth, and secondary students participating, in different groups depending on the community setup and community events. Our youth were highly represented.

- Mistissini: 165 (4 groups)
- Washaw Sibi: 20 (1 group)
- Waskaganish: 61 (3 groups)
- Waswanipi: 115 (4 groups)
- Wemindji: 40 (4 groups)
- North Bay : 16 (1 group)
- Sudbury: 10 (1 group)
- Chisasibi: 153 (4groups)
- Val d'Or students: 5 (1 group)
- Eastmain: 42 (4 groups)
- Ouje-Bougoumou: 41 (4 groups)
- Nemaska : 58 (4 groups)
- Whapmagoostui : 65 (5 groups)
- Ottawa students and community: 51 (2 groups)

In addition, the four entities involved more than 50 more people.
Total: approximately 900 participants

Preliminary Summary of Values and Guiding Principles

The Cree Nation Governance Working Group is working on summarizing all the results. This summary is a work in progress.

- Respect one another
- Strong Eeyou leadership
- Support community services
- Maintain our way of life
- Eeyou sovereignty
- Fair financial management to all communities
- Support health and well-being of Eeyou
- Have Cree people decide their future
- Maintain the identity of the Cree
- Preserve Eeyou language and culture
- Control our education for all Cree
- Respect our spiritual beliefs
- Maintain elder wisdom
- Adapt to current trends
- Control our land to preserve our language and culture
- Appreciation and respect of Cree people's voice
- Build on our resources for economic development

Recommendations to Quebec Negotiating Team

Across the whole Cree Nation, there was strong support for the proposal that Abel Bosum's team is working on. No one suggested less than the proposal. Many people wanted to go further, and have full control over category III lands.

Quotes

"Today, we are trying to save our lives and our way of life." –Chisasibi elder
"The thing I want to recommend, the maps of the territories, specially the lands in the territory, have the actual names that were given by the people that lived in the land." –Chisasibi woman
"To me the only place we gave away our own rights are the areas where they build the dams and camps for the workers. I hope Abel will fight for the land to take back what is rightfully ours." –Chisasibi elder
"Conscience of the land, land is the base of the negotiations." –Ottawa student
"We have the knowledge and we are capable in running our own land." –Waskaganish elder
"Ski doo trails on their lands, the Eeyou can't ride on them and yet it's their property." –Waswanipi public
"I noticed on the highway that there are signs up where we can't camp, hunt and so on." –Chisasibi public
"We are not allowed to hunt near the hydro camp and the sport hunters are hunting." –Chisasibi council
"Why propose a joint venture when we can have it all." –Waswanipi youth
"I will be glad to have our people to have full control of the land, we have our communities, controlling all the categories that's what I want to see. This is our land." –Ouje-Bougoumou public
"No more strings attached. The non-Cree government always has to find a way to be attached." –Mistissini elder
"Can we ask that the category 1 and 2 lands be expanded by community on the basis of today's population rather than by the population in 1975?" –Nemaska youth
"Make sure it's a nation-to-nation relationship." –Wemindji public

Main Themes of Specific Structural Suggestions

The Cree Nation Governance Working Group (CNGWG) is working on summarizing all the results. This summary is a work in progress.

- National government with local autonomy on authority
- Charter of rights and freedoms
- Cree justice system
- Ambivalence on tax –if there is tax, it should be Cree and not Quebec or national tax
- Investment in Cree language and culture
- Transparent government, such as frequent financial reports and a Code of Ethics
- Economic investment and financial institutions at the nation level
- Consultation with youth, women, men, elders before decisions are made
- Health system that includes traditional medicines and practices
- Strong government services
- Cree symbols –such as a flag, signs on entering the territory
- Education with a strong Cree language and cultural emphasis
- Checks and balances between traditional and contemporary parts of government –i.e. elders' advisory council or senate
- Continue traplines system to protect and use land wisely
- Leadership that includes youth and women

Next Steps

The CNGWG will be using the results to build models of governance that will work for Cree people.

Conclusion

We thank you for all your participation. Together we will build a government that reflects our long history and values in governing ourselves, and builds a strong foundation for our self-governance into the future.

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Design & Layout by April Pachanos

Audrey Poitras - Politics Award

Joseph F. Dion - Business & Commerce Award

Dakota Brant - Special Youth Award

Better than the Oscars!

The Aboriginal Achievement Awards: coming to a small screen near you

By Amy German

According to Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation, this year's awards show went off so well that it may have put some well-known American awards programs to shame.

When asked if she thought it might have been a better show than the Oscars, she responded, "Well, I only watched the first hour of the Oscars, but from what I saw, absolutely! This is just my opinion right but absolutely." She did say this while roaring with laughter.

This year's show, which was filmed in Edmonton on March 11, saw Smoke Signals stars Adam Beach and Evan Adams reunited to host the gala. And of course, just because they could, the two actors began the show by lampooning their original characters. They had a little help as the show's script was written by playwright powerhouse Drew Hayden Taylor.

Jamieson said the chemistry between Beach and Adams was just about on fire but that adding Hayden Taylor and his impeccable sense of timing made for the entire show "come off beautifully".

This year's program fittingly paid homage to horse culture because, as Jamieson explained, it not only acknowledged the Aboriginals of the plains but is something that unites the Indigenous around the globe. The opening musical sequence blended a combination of modern dance set to the traditional music of Alberta and then, keeping it global, the traditional music of Mongolia.

"Tune in for the opening number because that theme of horse culture really connects Indigenous people around the world," said Jamieson.

In terms of this year's 14 career award recipients, Jamieson said so many of them really stood out. What she was really proud of though was the fact that for the first time in history, eight of this year's recipients were women.

Of these eight remarkable women, Jamieson said Audrey Poitras, a Métis leader from Alberta who was honoured in the Politics category, had to be at the top of her list.

"Poitras has been elected now to an unprecedented fifth term and she is just the most humble, effective bridge builder. She has built an endowment fund for financial support for Métis students and just launched a training institute done in collaboration with the university out there. This is a woman who has been quietly effective in building and building and building," said Jamieson.

Executive Director of the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society of Canada Cindy Blackstock of the Gitksan Nation First Nation in British Columbia who was honoured in the public service category also came to mind for Jamieson.

"She has taken on a human-right challenge on the issue of equitable funding for Aboriginal children and so she stands out," said Jamieson.

Dr. Duncan Cree, a Mohawk from Kanehsatake, Quebec, was also extremely memorable to Jamieson for his contributions to the technological world. Receiving the honour for Technology & Trades, Cree possesses

three degrees in engineering, one of which is a doctorate of philosophy in mechanical engineering.

Cree was one of only 10 participants from Canada chosen to attend the annual Space Studies Program offered by the International Space University held in Beijing, China. He has contributed nationally and internationally in the engineering sector for his research in ceramic materials for use in both aeronautical and aerospace industries.

Jamieson said the person who probably stood out most to many of those taking in the show was Culture, Heritage & Spirituality Award recipient Annie Paingut Peterloosie, an Inuit from Nunavut who is described as a human archive of Inuit culture and heritage.

"Peterloosie is a national treasure in Inuit culture and spirituality. She is relied upon by the people in the region for her knowledge in Inuit culture and language," said Jamieson.

Not only does Peterloosie teach young people how to build houses out of sod in the summertime and igloos in the winter, she also tans hide and is known for being able to perform a type of Inuit acting that the people would often engage in during the winter months to entertain themselves. She also does a great deal of storytelling.

"PETERLOOSIE IS A NATIONAL TREASURE IN INUIT CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY. SHE IS RELIED UPON BY THE PEOPLE IN THE REGION FOR HER KNOWLEDGE IN INUIT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE."

Quebec's other major winner at this year's Awards was Jean LaRose, an Abenaki from Odenak who is currently the CEO of APTN.

While LaRose has a background in communications and previously worked in that domain for the Assembly of First Nations, his honour stemmed from what he has been able to do for the TV network, taking it from a $5.5 million deficit to a world-class station in a few short years.

It is because of LaRose's contributions that APTN has seen such a rapid financial turnaround but also moved on to be the first TV channel to broadcast the Olympics in eight different

Corinne Hunt - Arts Award

Indigenous languages. Under his leadership the station made the jump to HD and LaRose is also responsible for the creation of the Indigenous Television Network which is a brand-new international organization.

This year's Lifetime Achievement Award and Special Youth Award recipients were also women.

Dr. Lillian McGregor, who Jamieson believes is about 86 but McGregor refuses to confirm, was honoured for her many contributions to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. A registered nurse originally from the Whitefish Reserve in Ontario, McGregor moved to Toronto several decades ago where she is still an advisor and Elder-in-residence to many organizations. She was the first one ever at the University of Toronto First Nations House and received a Doctor of Laws

Ronald Edward Sparrow
Environment & Nat Resources Award

degree, in recognition of her outstanding contribution.

McGregor was one of the founders of the Native Canadian Centre in Toronto, which was one of the earliest Friendship Centres in the country, and has been relied upon by four successive Chiefs of Police in Toronto for advice and guidance. On her long list of accolades, she is a recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Award.

This year's Special Youth Award Recipient was Teyotsihstokwáthe Dakota Brant, a 23-year-old from Six Nations of the Grand River.

"Brant is Miss Indian World and is quite accomplished academically, earning for the first time in the world a degree in Indigenous Environmental Studies from Trent University," said Jamieson.

Brant is also proficient in speaking her own language, is an award-winning artist in the Haudenosaunee art of Raised Beadwork, a volunteer firefighter and a traditional dancer.

"We call them recipients or honourees because it is competitive but honestly, there are so many worthy people throughout Canada that this is sort of like the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington where you select a number of people each year that are entirely worthy of being honoured," said Jamieson.

While Jamieson couldn't go through the entire list of award winners in the space of time she had to speak with *the*

Nation, here is some information on the other recipients.

Arts Award recipient Corrine Hunt of the Komoyue and Tlingit First Nations

British Columbia was acknowledged for her contributions to the contemporary art world, producing works reflects the themes and traditions heritage. Having created more 2000 designs, her work is displayed at the Hilton Hotel Whistler, The Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in Vancouver and she designed the magnificent logo for the prestigious 2006 World Peace Forum. She is best known for co-designing the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic medals.

Joseph F. Dion of the Kehewin Cree Nation in Alberta was the 2011 Business & Commerce Award recipient as the Founder of Dion Resources Inc. The company networks in the areas of oil and gas development, wind power, forestry development, international finance and a variety of other business developments. He is also the founding Chairman and President of the Indian Resource Council of Canada.

This year's Education Award went to Dr. Margo L. Greenwood, a Cree from Alberta who was honoured for her work in post-secondary education intended to better the health and well-being of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, families and communities. Besides devoting two and a half decades to early childhood education, Greenwood has made contributions advising the UN and UNICEF and been an expert on a series of other national and international organizations.

The 2011 Environment & Natural Resources Award went to Ronald Edward Sparrow

of the Musqueam First Nation in British Columbia in recognition of his many years of hard work in fighting for Aboriginal fishing rights. He engaged in a protest against the restrictive framework prescribed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and took the case, known as the Sparrow Case, all the way to Supreme Court of Canada.

Dr. Marcia Anderson DeCoteau, a Métis from Manitoba, was the 2011 recipient in the category of Health for her contributions as a medical doctor. She was the youngest ever Aboriginal graduate from the Faculty of Medicine in Manitoba at the age of 24 and Dr. Anderson-DeCoteau is the youngest president of the Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada (IPAC).

Roger Jones of the Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation in Ontario was honoured as this year's Law & Justice Award recipient. Jones plays a critical role in key legal and political developments internationally and in Canada. This includes the development of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples, the Canadian constitution negotiations, the Federal Crown First Nations Political Accord in 2005, and the Ipperwash Inquiry in Ontario. He was also the founding president of the Indigenous Bar Association, and the former Vice-Chair, Native Law section of the Canadian Bar Association.

Frederick G. Sasakamoose of the Ahtahkakoop First Nation in Saskatchewan was the 2011 honouree for Sports, having been the first Aboriginal and Treaty Cree person to play for the National Hockey League, playing for the Chicago Blackhawks from 1953-1954. His contributions in the NHL resonated within his community for generations afterwards, having used the opportunity to create hockey schools for less fortunate children and the development of several sports programs.

On behalf of *the Nation* magazine, congratulations to all of the 2011 recipients!

Annie Paingut Peterloosie - Culture, Heritage & Spirituality Award

Roger Jones - Law and Justice Award

Cindy Blackstock - Public Service Award

Creating dialogue, visually

A MONTREAL PHOTO COLLECTIVE HOPES ITS EXHIBIT WILL BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN ABORIGINALS AND NON-ABORIGINALS

By Christine Rigby

Le Collectif photo – le Rapprochement is a visual-arts exhibit currently being exposed in Montreal North. It is the brainchild of Suzanne Bourdon, a Communications graduate from the Université du Québec à Montréal with a passion for photography. The idea for the exhibit was conceived in 2002 when Bourdon traveled to James Bay for work. After spending time in the north, she returned to Montreal inspired by her experiences and determined to find a way of creating a dialogue between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals. On her return, Bourdon combined her background in communications, her talent as photographer and her dedication to social causes to create this exhibit with the intention of achieving this goal.

Not long after conceiving this project, Bourdon discovered other photographers who shared a similar vision. Along with photographers Iva Zimova, Romain Briard, Paul Brindamour and Robert Fréchette, Bourdon formed Le Collectif photo – le Rapprochement. These five captured images for the exhibit that they hope will not only open dialogue, but will also help dispel myths and stereotypes about First Nations People.

All of these photographers have spent time in various First Nations communities, where they have lived, worked, eaten and celebrated with Aboriginal people and consequently, have a better understanding of life in First Nations communities, even as outsiders, for having done so. It's as though they all, in some way, feel that you couldn't share a story without experiencing it firsthand. On her website, Zimova states, "I like to stay with the people of the region I am visiting; live with them, eat with them, work with them. I just can't jump into their lives, take the photos and leave. I must become comfortable with them – I need to be accepted by the community or by the family I stay with. Then I can take the pictures."

The collective's current exhibit is in the Aire Libre space at the Librairie Monet in Montreal. Upon enter-

ing the gallery, it is clear that this is a project maintained by passion and respect. The relatively small space has been lovingly designed, with an emphasis on the photographs, but a clear importance has been placed on other objets d'arts that Bourdon has collected to compliment the exhibit, including tamarack goose decoys made by the Cree Nation Arts and Crafts Association.

The photographs are as beautiful as the objective of this project. They are almost exclusively black-and-white and shot on film. Most capture moments in the day-to-day lives of people from various First Nations communities in Quebec. They depict children, men, women and artists, usually smiling, playing or working on their craft. A particularly striking image, a donation from award-winning photographer Gabor Szilasi, shows an older woman sitting on a chair in a sparsely furnished room, with a mysterious smile on her face. Appropriately titled, Amérindienne chez elle, the photo was taken in Mistissini in 1977. The image builds curiosity within the viewer and makes you wonder, about the subject's life, and maybe even of the similarities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal lifestyles, which was Bourdon's intention when assembling the exhibit.

Several of the images engage viewers in this way. The dynamic shots, full of life and energy, allow viewers to feel like they are present in the moment that has been captured. Even the still photographs, like Bourdon's image of a pair of hands cradling a basket, evoke a desire to know more. Luckily, she is often present at the exhibit to answer questions and share her experiences. The images, of course, could stand alone in telling stories, but a trip to the gallery seems all the more complete with this type of exchange, especially given that the goal of the project is to do just that, create a dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Using photography as a tool to engage the public in an attempt to open dialogue or create social change, however, is not easy. In the case of this exhibit,

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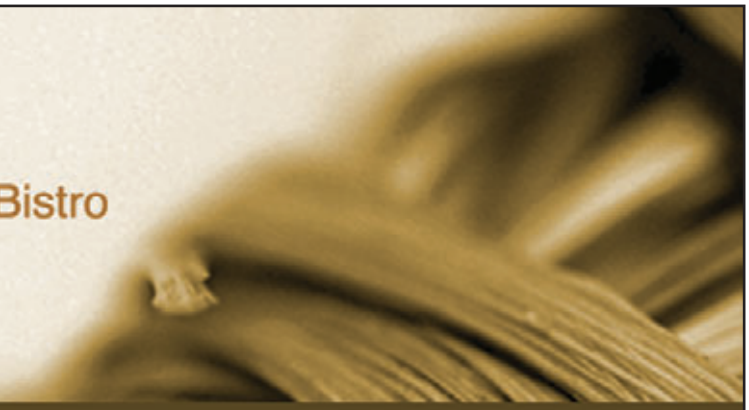

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Crees, Whapmagoostui, 1996, by Iva Zimova

it seems fair to say that Bourdon is on the path to success. Since its debut in 2008, the exhibition has been shown in several galleries throughout Quebec, but Bourdon hopes to extend this to the other provinces as well. Currently she is in negotiation to have the exhibit travel to a gallery in Alberta, to begin that process. If she succeeds in Alberta, Bourdon hopes that the exhibit will grow, and that its images will help inspire other photographers to join the cause and share their positive perspective of First Nations People from their communities.

The exhibition runs to March 27 at the Librairie Monet, 2752 de Salaberry, Montreal, 514-337-4083, www.librairiemonet.com

The next chapter of the exhibit can be viewed at the First Nations Garden in the Montreal Botanical Garden from April 15 to October 31.

For more info on the collective: www.collectiflerapprochement.com

"THE DYNAMIC SHOTS, FULL OF LIFE AND ENERGY, ALLOW VIEWERS TO FEEL LIKE THEY ARE PRESENT IN THE MOMENT THAT HAS BEEN CAPTURED."

THE BUILD-UP OF A SUCCESS STORY

Here's an overview of training programs developed by the Cégep St-Félicien and the Collegial Studies Center of Chibougamau in collaboration with Cree Human Resources Development - CHRD.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Eight students graduated from the special needs training that took place in Waswanipi from January 2010 to November 2010. This full time, Attestation of Collegial Studies training program of 915 hours was based in the community. During the training, the graduates learned many skills related to the profession of the special needs educator. The main tasks were:

- To research and do presentations on different types of special needs
- To assess the needs of the child and his/her environment
- To plan activities and interventions for the children with special needs and their families
- To create and apply an intervention plan
- To monitor children's development
- To develop partnerships with the parents and with different resources in the community

The students also spent two weeks in Montreal for an internship. They had the opportunity to visit different organizations and to work in collaboration with many specialists in the profession. They came back with many good ideas to implement in their community.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

There are many job opportunities in the communities for qualified special needs educators. They can work in the daycares, in the schools, in the after school programs, in the Multi-Service Day Centers (MSDC) and with any other organizations or programs that are involved with people with special needs.

The Business and Community Services of Cégep St-Félicien and the Collegial Studies Center of Chibougamau and Cree Human Resources Development: *partners in your success*.

At the graduation : Abel Dixon, Charlotte Bosum Dixon, Marlena Gull, Mary Ann Neeposh Jolly, Monique Saganash, Roslyne Cheezo, Sharlene Gull, Vanessa Etapp Saganash

The home movie on a global scale

By Lyle Stewart

So many home videos of the multiple disasters to strike Japan over the past week have been posted online that, even while sitting in the comfort and safety of our homes, it's almost as if you can suffer post-traumatic stress repeatedly reliving the tsunami horror that came roaring ashore in northern Japan after the massive 9.0 earthquake. The unreal visuals are as overwhelming as they are ubiquitous.

The sound that accompanies the images truly brings it home for the viewer. The shocked gasps and screams of people behind the camera. The grinding and screeching of metal on concrete as buildings are torn off their foundations and pushed down a street that in seconds has been transformed into a raging torrent of water and debris.

Regular television media isn't that personal. The smooth filters of network news and the neat, two-minute packaging and professional narration of its mini news movies seem to insulate the viewer from the real shock and human agony that these amateur videos capture in minute, heart-wrenching detail. We understand immediately that everything one has taken for granted in life has been swept away in a matter of seconds by an unstoppable, unreasonable force.

As hard as it is to watch, the disaster voyeurism is habit-forming. I've found myself looking for ever-more spectacular scenes of destruction and chaos.

After a while, though, the mind becomes numb to the tragedy of it all, probably as a natural psychological defence mechanism.

So, while the communications technology that enables this kind of raw journalism can bring us all closer, faster, it can ultimately be a barrier as well. As long as the hurt and death and loss are only on our screens, it can be digested and eventually forgotten when we move on to the next shocking new thing.

Certainly, many of the dictators across the Middle East in the face of massive popular uprisings were thankful for the Japanese disaster as it distracted world attention from their bloody attempts to cling to power. Perhaps coincidentally, not long after the earthquake, the guns were turned on those who thought the momentum in favour of democracy and human rights had become as unstoppable as a tsunami.

"AS HARD AS IT IS TO WATCH, THE DISASTER VOYEURISM IS HABIT-FORMING. AFTER A WHILE, THOUGH, THE MIND BECOMES NUMB TO THE TRAGEDY OF IT ALL, PROBABLY AS A NATURAL PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFENCE MECHANISM."

But the waves of protest are breaking on the hard metal breakwaters of armed repression. Here again, the amateur videographers are capturing the horror of government murder from Bahrain to Libya to Yemen.

Despite reassuring the US government that it would engage in dialogue and negotiations with the opposition, the Bahraini regime has instead begun massacring its opponents on the streets of the capital, Manama. One home video shows a man walking up to a line of soldiers and attempting to talk to them. Instead, a soldier simply shoots him. After he staggers, the soldier fires again, and the man collapses, dead.

Brutal and graphic it may be, but the video sequence accurately shows the response to attempted dialogue and negotiation by the Bahrain regime: summary execution.

While it may have been too much to hope for a clean sweep of the bloody police states that predominate in this region after the inspiring revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (as unfinished and messy as they may be), the apparent disaster unfolding in Libya is heartbreaking.

After taking control of almost the whole of the country outside the capital of Tripoli, the mad Colonel Gadhafi has been able to turn back the tide thanks to hard armour and hired mercenaries. The Libyan near-victory is turning into a rout as the world watches, but sits on its hands as the heroes are eliminated. Meanwhile, the video that accompanied and helped illuminate the short-lived liberation of much of the North African country is dwindling as the country returns to the long night of autocratic rule.

These unfiltered glimpses into the lives of people on the frontlines of the world's dramatic battles of survival – against the elements in Japan, or against the power mad in the Middle East – turn us all into instant experts on places we scarcely knew existed only weeks ago. But that is as it should be, as long as we feel the humanity of those who are struggling to exist and improve their lives.

* * *

From the big picture to the very personal: I'd just like to add a note to recognize the efforts of one of my best friends, comrades and verbal sparring partners to illuminate our own corner of the world on the occasion of his half-century. Will Nicholls, who helped found this magazine and has ensured it survived through thick and thin, is turning 50 on March 28. Will, you can be proud of what you have achieved so far, but I hope you know that in many ways your work is just beginning.

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Cree Regional Authority
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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)
Grand conseil des Cris (Eeyou/Eenou Istchee)

March 8 is International Women's Day!

As we celebrate IWD, it marks 100 years that we have internationally acknowledged and appreciated the contributions of women throughout the world.

We live in a world where many women still face challenges throughout the world in terms of access to education, necessities of life, security, freedom, the right to participate in society, to speak out, or even to have their lives valued. Indigenous women who are our sisters, mothers and daughters are missing throughout Canada and the world.

In Eeyou Istchee, we are fortunate to have our connection to our lands, culture and we still value and celebrate the strength of our women. Today, with the world community, we celebrate the contributions of Cree women within our families, communities, organizations and lives. We value and respect all they have done for us, and continue to build shoulder-to-shoulder a healthier and stronger Nation.

In the Cree Nation, we have women leaders in politics, business, education, finance and many other professions. Their accomplishments are inspiring to us all. However, it is also those women we see every day, that give us so much in our daily lives and who are the foundation of our families and communities. We thank you for everything you give, and for all the things you do.

Happy International Women's Day.

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A problem with firearms

I wish to address a serious and disturbing problem in the Cree Nation that is growing at an alarming rate and, quite frankly, it is simply unbelievable. Answer me this, how many times can you recall in the past year where there has been an incident of an intoxicated individual wandering around in one of our Cree communities with a firearm?

Far too many by my count, in fact, once is one time too many. You know what I'm talking about, that phone call from a relative or a friend to tell you of the recent shooting in their community. Or how about this, your neighbour calling to let you know that there's a "drunk with a gun" in your community. And it seems to look like that this is the "in" thing to do, that it's cool to pick up a gun and blow off some steam when you're drunk. Personally, I think it's pathetic. I mean, if you're drinking and all hell breaks loose and you think of grabbing a gun. Two words – SEEK HELP.

I'm embarrassed and ashamed to say that this is beginning to be a regular occurrence almost every weekend somewhere in the Cree Nation. Since when and where should this be a "regular occurrence"? It would be more understandable for me if we lived in a warzone, but we don't. And, more importantly, what and when are we going to do something about it?

Oh, I can tell you when… only when one of these so-called regular occurrences comes with a number attached to it, the number of dead in that occurrence. Some of you might be thinking I'm exaggerating or this will never happen in the Cree Nation. Well, I hope you remember that thought when you hear of a 5-year-old child being buried in one of our communities because of a stray or ricocheting bullet from one of these occurrences. Or even worse, when you're burying someone you love because of "some drunk with a gun".

Here's a fact for you to consider, the .308, which is one of the popular rifles of our hunters, is roughly the equivalent of the 7.62x51mm NATO round, which is more powerful than what the M16 or the AK47 fires. And this is the standard sniper rifle round used by the military to take down enemies up to a kilometre away. A kilometer away!

Imagine a .308 rifle shot by a drunk at a house, I'm pretty sure it will shoot straight through the house and end up in the next house behind it. Imagine a baby in a swing, quietly sleeping, and a .308 bullet rips through walls and hits the baby, killing the infant instantly. Or granny sitting in the living room in a rocking chair just pondering on some thoughts on the day, and a bullet zings in and hits her, dead. Am I exaggerating? I think not, the possibility of that happening is very real, too real for comfort, for my comfort anyway.

I, for one, think the problem has escalated to a point where it can no longer be ignored. If these incidents happened in a city down south, the solution is usually police officers shooting the armed individual once they feel their lives are in danger. And it's not the Hollywood movie type of shot, where the good guy shoots the gun out of the bad guy's hand or a shot to the leg to injure the suspect. They are trained to shoot on the centre of mass, basically meaning a shot in the centre of the chest. The chance of missing is greatly reduced when a shot is placed on the centre of mass, since a moving hand or leg makes a harder target to hit.

So, is this the solution that we have to start using in our communities? I'll leave you to your answers. But personally, if I am ever in the proximity of such an occurrence, have a firearm within reach, and if I feel that either me or a loved one is in danger… well… putting one in the centre of mass will be a thought I will seriously consider.

Anonymous

Congratulations

This is to express my excitement after reading the article written by Amy German, entitled "Cree Youth Going Global" in your January 14, 2011 issue of Nation (Vol. 18, No. 5) which features the story of Charley Wash [CNYC's Youth Forum coordinator's] "Cree World Youth" project.

I am hoping to read more about his project in future issues of the Nation, as I and my students will want to be updated concerning the progress of this wonderful opportunity for our youth! It was so edifying to them that one of our young people wrote to me and asked if we could take up a collection so that he and three other young people could go to Africa to help the poor children! Doesn't that just warm your heart!

In our current "ME, FIRST" generation, these young ones are looking for what is "real" and after working with young people for nearly 20 years I can tell you that for them, "real" is love. Stories like this tug at their hearts and give them hope. I agree with Mr. Wash and I believe that in spite of the sad history of their ancestors, which they hear about on every turn, they will begin to direct their focus outward, reaching beyond their own spheres to help others in need.

Given the most uplifting message of this article and also that of the article in the same issue written by the same author, "A Life-Changing Adventure", your magazine has captured my attention as an educator of First Nation youth.

I wish to compliment the photographers, Helen Voyageur and Joshua Iserhoff and Nation's photography team of Amy German, N. Diamond, W. Nicholls, and D. Valade for having the insight to bless the use of Helen Voyageur's amazing Lion on the cover of this issue.

The youth of this Nation are reading what you print. In Media Literacy, they are being taught how to discern what is real. They can detect "bias" in journalism. I am looking forward to reading more "positive" stories that show adults and young people being strong and "doing exploits".

These articles were most inspiring! Well done, everyone!

Ronda Potts, OCT
Literacy Coach,
Bear Island, Lake Temagami

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UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

Grant me the serenity

by Xavier Kataquapit

It has been very cold here in the Timmins area since the beginning of January. I prefer the clean, fresh nature of winter but I have to admit that this 30 below weather is not much fun anymore. I am not on the land much these days and I am at the computer working a lot so I am in the house most of the time.

I guess I have gotten away from really enjoying what winter has to offer us up here in northern Ontario. When I was a teenager back home in Attawapiskat I spent very little time in the house. I was out on the land all the time either making my way on a snowmobile with the family to faraway places on the James Bay or working 20 hours a day in the family contracting business.

Life was not easy up the coast for many reasons. I was in a real fog at that point in my life as I had not sobered up yet. Most of the time I felt confused, lost and desperate. Winter offered me the ability to escape from the community and all my troubles. Often I would head out at 30 and 40 below on my snowmobile on my own. I would race along on the white snow under the glow of a warm sun in the biting cold wind. I pushed that snow machine to the limit as I skimmed along the surface of the river and out over the frozen muskeg wilderness.

In the clean, white expanse I focused only on keeping myself alive while travelling at crazy speeds. My face was numb with the freezing cold, my hands stiff under the moose hide mitts and my heart raced as I pushed myself as far as I could out on to the limits in land, weather, machine and body. It was my way to meditate. Yes, it was dangerous but it worked. My mind had to focus so intently that I could not possibly be troubled with any worrying thoughts. There was simply no room in my brain for worry.

Out on the bay I might run into Wabusk (the polar bear) if I travelled far enough. I did not venture close to Wabusk even though I had a powerful sled under me. The polar bear can run at speeds up to 40 kms an hour and I was not about to take any chance that I could have an accident or mishap with Wabusk in the area. I would see the Kah-kah-koo (ravens) when I was close to land. They seemed to be happily teasing me as they flew in singles or sometimes in pairs over me.

When I tired myself out I would head back to town in the golden hue of a winter setting sun. On the far side of the bank facing Attawapiskat I would park my snowmobile and sit back to watch the last rays of light shimmer over town. It was so cold. It was also completely quiet. I bundled up in my snowsuit and just lay there in a quiet that you can only feel at minus 30 or 40 in the frozen northern wilderness. There was nothing on my mind but the sound of silence. Every once in a while Kah-kah-koo would come close to check up on me. They hollered out strange sounds that brought a smile to my face.

I stayed out on that bank as long as I could. As I lay back on the snowmobile seat I stared up at the northern sky as it turned from a pale blue to a very dark purple and then to black. Then, out popped the stars like a million diamonds in the sky. If I was lucky a layer of magical lights of the Aurora Borealis or Wawatay would appear to dance for me. They flowed like a river of green, blue and red over town.

Everything felt better. I was refreshed and rejuvenated and ready to face my life in my small, remote Cree community. I would return with hope and peace as my companions. Life would be better and when things got hard again I could always turn to the land and head out in search of serenity.

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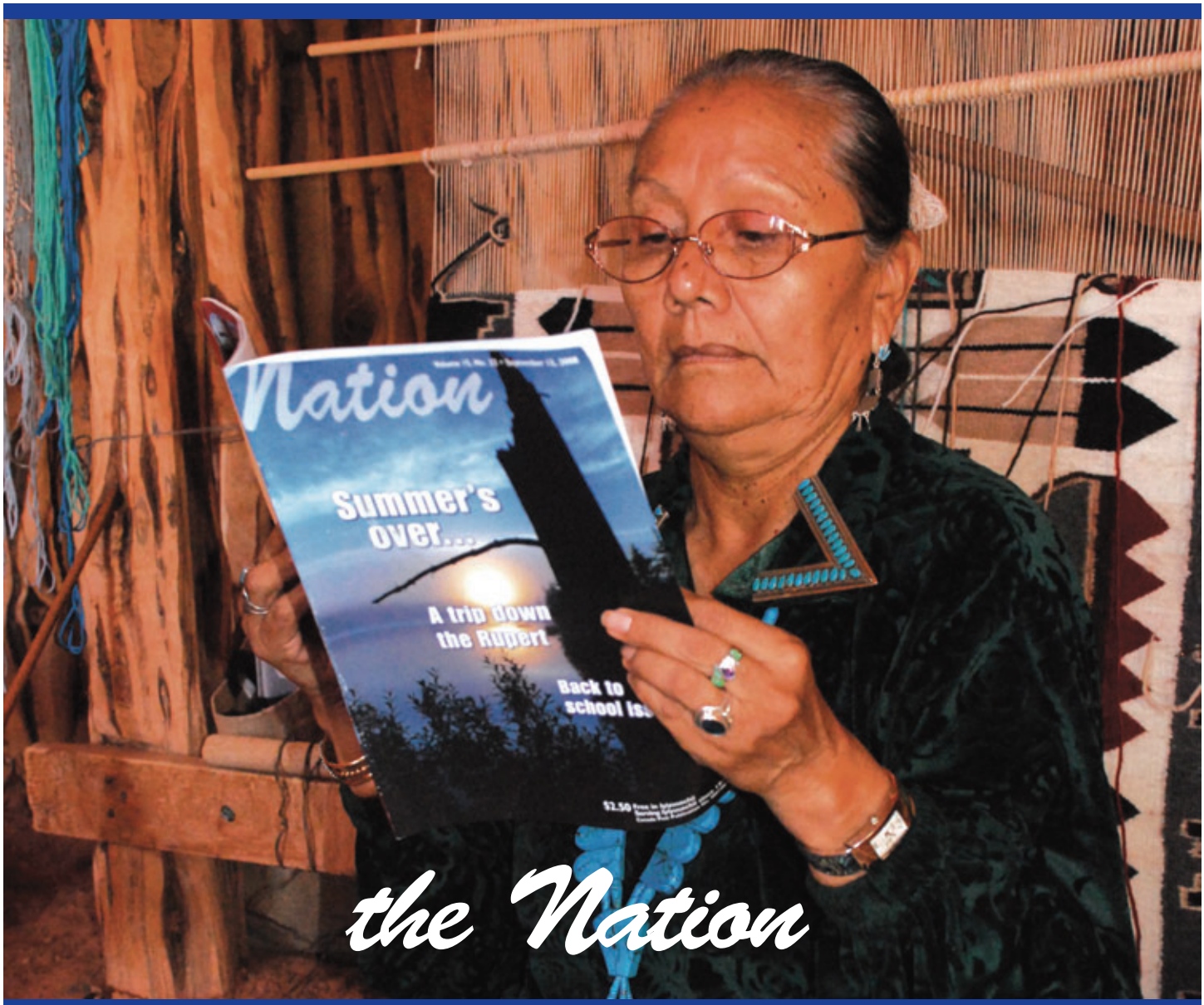

the Nation

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CLASSIFIEDS

BIRTHDAYS

Special birthday greetings go out to my Aunt Daisy Georgekish on March 19th (WEM) and to my mom/grandmother Nellie Pepabano on March 21st (CHIS). Also, happy birthday to my niece Crystal-Lynn Cromarty on March 21st (CHIS). I hope you all have a good day on your birthdays. May you all be blessed with many more to come! With love and prayers from Jennifer, Robert & the boys (OJAY)

I would like to wish a happy belated birthday to my love Antoine Otter on Feb. 20th, 2011. I love you and I will ALWAYS be here for you. I hope you enjoyed your birthday! agoodeh Happy birthday once again many more to come! P.S Happy belated Valentine's Day! Nii: Whitney xox-

Sending out the warmest birthday wishes to Miss Kira Rose Blackned of Nemaska, who turned 7 years old on March 18th, 2011. We hope you enjoyed your birthday! We love you and miss you. Natasha, Gary & Lindsay

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Where to get help: bilingual, anonymous, confidential and free phone services, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Missing Children's Network: They'll help you find kids who have run away or disappeared. 514-843-4333.

Kid's Help Phone Line: 1-800-668-6868 (www.kidshelpphone.ca)

Youth helpline: 1-800-263-2266 (www.teljeunes.com)

Parent helpline: 1-800-361-5085 (www.parenthelpline.ca)

Drugs: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.drogueaidereference.qc.ca)

Gambling: help and reference: 1-800-265-2626 (www.info-reference.qc.ca)

S.O.S. Conjugal Violence: 1-800-363-9010 (www.sosvioleenceconjugale.com)

Health and Sexuality resources center: 1-888-855-7432 (Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm) (www.criss.org)

Gay Helpline: 1-888-505-1010 (Monday to Friday, 8 am to 3 am and Saturday-Sunday, 11 am to 3 am)

The Native Women's Shelter of Montreal: 1-866-403-4688. (www.nwsm.info)

Suicide Action Québec: 1-866-277-3553

Residential School Survivors: A 24 hour toll-free crisis line is available to provide immediate emotional assistance and can be reached 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-866-925-4419. Other support services and information for survivors is available on the AFN website at: http://www.afn.ca/residentialschools/resources.html

Pssst...

Have any information you'd like to share with *the Nation*? Feel like there's something the rest of the Cree Nation should know?

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Cree School Board Tours

2011

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Dates of Cree School Board Tours:

- Whapmagoostui – March 9 and 10, 2011*
- Chisasibi – March 21 and 22, 2011*
- Wemindji – February 7 and 8, 2011
- Eastmain – February 9 and 10, 2011
- Mistissini – February 21 and 22, 2011
- Waskaganish – March 7 and 8, 2011
- Nemaska – March 23 and 24, 2011
- Waswanipi – March 28 and 29, 2011
- Ouje-Bougoumou – March 30 and 31, 2011
- Washaw Sibi - Dates T.B.D

***NEW DATES**

Agenda Items for Cree School Board Tours

- Council Policy Manual;
- Executive Summary of *Communication, Accountability and Follow-up for School Improvement* (CAFSI) Report and Recommendations;
- CSB Strategic Action Plan (2011-2015);
- The Plan for School Improvement;
- Language Instruction Programs.